

REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 2-16 and 18-20 are currently being prosecuted. Claims 1 and 17 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 2, 3, 4, and 18 are amended. Claims 2, 3, 8, 18, and 20 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that:

Claims 2, 4, 15, 16, and 18 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and including all of the limitations of the base and any intervening claims;

claims 3 and 5-7 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base and any intervening claims; and

claims 8-14 and 19-20 are allowed.

In response, claims 2 and 18 are rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and including all of the limitations of the base claim 1; and claim 3 is rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim 1 and intervening claim 2.

Accordingly, claim 2, 3, and 18 are in condition for allowance.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 2, 4, 15, 16, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In order to overcome this rejection, the Applicant has amended claims 2, 4, and 18 to correct each of the deficiencies specifically pointed out by the Examiner. Applicant respectfully submits that the claims, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicant regards as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Wakao et al. (WO99/16654). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As noted above, claims 1 and 17 are canceled.

In addition, as noted above, claims 2 and 18 are rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and including all of the limitations of the base claim 1; and claim 3 is rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim 1 and intervening claim 2.

Accordingly, independent claims 2, 3, and 18 are in condition for allowance.

Regarding dependent claims 4-7 and 15-16, these claims should also be allowable due to their dependence on an allowable independent claim, or due to the additional novel limitations contained therein. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) are respectfully requested.

All claims of the present application are now in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

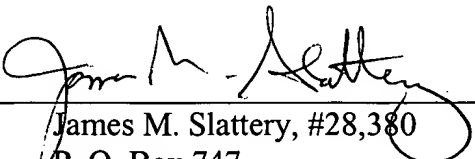
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), the Applicant respectfully petitions for a one (2) months extension of time for filing a response in connection with the present application and the required fee of \$420.00 is being filed concurrently herewith.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
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